



# ILLICIT DRUG DATA REPORT



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# ILLICIT DRUG DATA REPORT 2020-21

# **CEO FOREWORD**



The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC)'s annual *Illicit Drug Data Report,* now in its 19th edition, continues to provide an authoritative picture of illicit drug data in Australia. Complementing the ACIC's regular national wastewater reporting, the *Illicit Drug Data Report* informs policy and operational decisions across government, industry and the not-for-profit sector and focuses efforts to reduce the impact of illicit drugs on our communities.

Serious and organised criminals are at the centre of Australia's illicit drug market, motivated by greed, power and profit. Serious and organised crime groups continue to generate significant profits from the sale of illicit substances, with the price paid for illicit drugs in Australia among the highest in the world. The estimated street value of the weight of amphetamines, MDMA, cannabis, cocaine and heroin seized nationally in 2020–21 was around \$7.7 billion, of which amphetamines accounted for 70%. The value of the markets for these 5 drugs based on consumption during the relevant period was in excess of \$10.3 billion. Together, these figures underline the size of the black economy that relates to illicit drug markets. In this reporting period, the combined weight of cannabis, heroin and cocaine detected at the Australian border was less than the weight of detected amphetamine-type stimulants (excluding MDMA). Methylamphetamine, which constitutes the majority of the amphetamine-type stimulants category of drugs, remains the most harmful illicit drug impacting Australia by some margin.

Illicit drug use, and the harms caused by illicit drugs, cannot be addressed by law enforcement alone. The threat and harm posed by illicit drugs to the Australian community underscores the need for intelligence, law enforcement and health agencies to work collaboratively to combat both the supply of and demand for illicit drugs in Australia. The importation, manufacture, cultivation, distribution and use of illicit drugs in Australia remain a focal point for law enforcement and health agencies. This report combines illicit drug data from a variety of sources, including law enforcement, forensic services, health and academia, which inform our understanding of drug markets and assist in focusing our collective efforts to respond to the issue of illicit drugs.

Over the last decade, during which time the Australian population increased by 14%:

- the number of national illicit drug seizures increased 39%
- the weight of illicit drugs seized nationally increased 74%
- the number of national illicit drug arrests increased 51%.

The data for this reporting period presents a mixed picture of Australia's drug markets, with the cocaine and heroin markets indicating expansion. A number of new records were set in this reporting period, and include:

- 6,452 national cocaine seizures
- 41.4 tonnes of illicit drugs seized nationally
- 18.6 tonnes of other and unknown drugs seized nationally, which included a single seizure of 1,4BD weighing over 4 tonnes in Victoria
- 10.7 tonnes of cannabis seized nationally
- 1.2 tonnes of heroin seized nationally
- 24,255 cannabis detections at the Australian border
- 622 heroin detections at the Australian border
- 5.2 tonnes of amphetamine type stimulants (excluding MDMA) detected at the Australian border
- 2.5 tonnes of cocaine detected at the Australia border
- 1.2 tonnes of heroin detected at the Australian border.

These upward trends not only highlight the continued vigilance of intelligence and law enforcement agencies in reducing the supply of illicit drugs, but also the resilience of these markets. Illicit drugs continue to be a concern for law enforcement and the wider community, and the data in this report illustrate the ongoing need to reduce demand.

The ACIC regularly seeks out new drug-related data to better understand the nuances within Australian drug markets. For the first time, drug driving data is included in this report. The data covers both roadside and mandatory drug testing and is an innovative addition to the report.

Of the roadside tests conducted nationally in 2020–21, amphetamine/methylamphetamine was most commonly detected, followed by cannabis and MDMA. Males accounted for the greatest proportion of drug drivers, with those in the 30–39 age group accounting for the greatest proportion of positive drug driving tests. The number of drivers who tested positive to only one drug accounted for the majority of the total test results in most jurisdictions. We will continue to work with state and territory police services to build this data set to provide better insights into drug market dynamics.

I commend the efforts of all who assisted the ACIC by contributing to this report, from law enforcement, forensic services, and academia. If not for your vital contributions and continued support, it would not be possible to understand the complex and evolving Australian drug market.

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Matthew Rippon Acting Chief Executive Officer Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission

# **IMPORTATION METHODS**



# **NATIONAL SEIZURES AND ARRESTS**









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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report contains data and analysis provided by federal, state and territory police, as well as forensic laboratories and the Department of Home Affairs.<sup>1</sup> These agencies provide significant contributions to each report and their expertise and experience, along with their continued support, have been invaluable to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC).

Key contributors are listed below:

- Australian Border Force
- Australian Federal Police
- Australian Federal Police, ACT Policing
- Australian Federal Police, Forensic Drug Intelligence
- Australian Institute of Criminology, Drug Use Monitoring in Australia Program
- ChemCentre
- Department of Home Affairs
- Forensic Science Service Tasmania
- Forensic Science South Australia
- National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program
- New South Wales Police Force
- Northern Territory Police
- Queensland Health and Forensic Scientific Services
- Queensland Police Service
- South Australia Police
- Tasmania Police
- Victoria Police
- Western Australia Police Force.

<sup>1</sup> Further information about the data, jurisdictional commentary and explanatory notes is contained in the *Statistics* chapter.

اNTRODUCTION (الم

# INTRODUCTION

The ACIC's Illicit Drug Data Report (IDDR) is the only report of its type in Australia, providing a national picture of the illicit drug market. The IDDR incorporates data from a variety of sources and provides an important evidence-base to assess current and future illicit drug trends, offers a brief analysis of those trends and assists decision-makers in the development of strategies to combat the threat posed by illicit drugs.

The ACIC collects data annually from all state and territory police services, the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Home Affairs, state and territory forensic laboratories and research centres. Illicit drug data collected and presented in this report for the 2020–21 financial year include:

- arrest
- detection
- seizure
- purity
- profiling
- price.

The purpose of this report is to provide statistics and analysis to assist decision-makers develop evidence-based illicit drug supply, demand and harm reduction strategies. The data also assist the Australian Government meet national and international reporting obligations.

The ACIC uses the National Illicit Drug Reporting Format (NIDRF) system to standardise the arrest, seizure and purity data received from police services and contributing forensic organisations.

Similar to previous reports, each chapter in the 2020–21 report provides an overview of changes since the previous reporting period and also includes some longer-term trends in key market indicators including border detections, national seizures and arrests, price, purity, forensic analysis, wastewater analysis and drug user survey data—which inform and enhance our understanding of Australia's illicit drug markets and the ability to identify changes within them.

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Variations exist in drug markets, both internationally and domestically, within and between states and territories, and over time. Singular datasets in isolation are unable to provide a national picture of the Australian illicit drug markets and it is only through the layering of multiple data—both current and historical—that we are able to enhance our understanding of illicit drug markets.

Cannabis and amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) continue to be the 2 main illicit drug markets in Australia. This is illustrated by supply indicators such as national arrests, with cannabis and ATS accounting for close to three quarters of the total number of national arrests in 2020–21 (47% for cannabis and 26% for ATS). In 2020–21, cannabis accounted for 52% of national seizures and 26% of the weight of illicit drugs seized nationally. In the same reporting period, ATS accounted for 27% of national seizures and 15% of the weight of illicit drugs seized nationally.

COVID-19 restrictions, both domestically and internationally, continued to impact drug market trends for this reporting period, but increases in the weight of detections of the major drugs except MDMA, and in the weight of seizures of the major drugs except ATS, indicate serious and organised crime groups found a way to supply illicit markets. Overall, based on supply and demand indicators for the main illicit drug markets in Australia in 2020–21:

- The ATS market, particularly the methylamphetamine market, remains large. At the same time, the MDMA market is small and showed signs of contracting.
- The cannabis market remains large and is amply supplied.
- The heroin market, which had increased seizures and detections during the review period, remains relatively small.
- The cocaine market continued to expand.
- While the market for other drugs remains small compared to the above markets, the anabolic steroids and other selected hormones, tryptamines and anaesthetics markets showed signs of potential expansion.

In addition to domestic border detections and seizures, international operations and collaboration also impact Australian drug markets. A summary of some current international operations and initiatives is included in Appendix 1.

Over the last decade, the methylamphetamine, MDMA, cannabis and cocaine markets have expanded, while the heroin market fluctuated but has largely remained unchanged at a macro level.



Methylamphetamine	MDMA	Cannabis	Heroin	Cocaine
Border detections				
Number				
<b>63%</b> 1,077 → 1,753°	<ul> <li>● 84%</li> <li>964 → 1,773</li> </ul>	<b>0 812%</b> 2,660 → 24,255	<ul> <li>● 247%</li> <li>179 → 622</li> </ul>	<b>122%</b> 979 → 2,169
Weight				
● <b>1,423%</b> 347kg → 5,290kg <sup>a</sup>	<b>786%</b> 12kg → 106kg	<b>0</b> 4,720% 17kg → 819kg	<ul> <li><b>387%</b></li> <li>256kg → 1,246kg</li> </ul>	<ul> <li><b>0 228%</b></li> <li>785kg → 2,575kg</li> </ul>
National seizures				
Number				
<b>97%</b> 13,050 → 25,745 <sup>b</sup>	<b>0 27%</b> 2,036 → 2,578	<b>7%</b> 51,823 → 55,199	<b>0 21%</b> 1,758 → 2,130	<b>1</b> ,336 → 6,452
Weight				
<ul> <li><b>6 575%</b></li> <li>872kg → 5,891kg<sup>b</sup></li> </ul>	● 117% 115kg → 249kg	<b>● 47%</b> 7,349kg → 10,787kg	<ul> <li><b>229%</b></li> <li>388kg → 1,278kg</li> </ul>	● <b>362%</b> 956kg → 4,420kg
National arrests				
● <b>133%</b> 14,186 → 33,090 <sup>b</sup>	<b>9%</b> 2,526 → 2,744	<b>9%</b> 61,011 → 66,285	<b>€ 4%</b> 2,714 → 2,826°	<b>0 499%</b> 995 → 5,958
Median price <sup>d</sup>				
<b>●</b> \$100 → \$92.50	<b>U</b> \$35 → \$25	\$26.25 → \$22.50	<b>∩</b> \$60 → \$100	\$60 → \$65
Annual median purity	range			
<b>∩</b> 7.9% to 60.0%	€ 14.9% to 18.1%	_	● 14.6% to 46.0%	18.7% to 52.5%
61.9% to 84.0%	31.3% to 63.6% <sup>e</sup>		29.1% to 64.5%	22.0% to 62.5%
NDSHS <sup>f</sup>				
Use in lifetime				
<b>()</b> 7% → 6%	<b>()</b> 10% → 13%	<b>(</b> ) 35% → 37%	<b>&gt;</b> 1% → 1%	<b>(</b> ) 7% → 11%
Recent use				
<b>()</b> 2% → 1%	3% → 3%	<ul> <li>10% → 12%</li> </ul>	<1% → <1%	<b>1</b> 2% → 4%
DUMA <sup>g</sup>				
<b>∩</b> 23% → 49%	<1% → <1%	<b>U</b> 48% → 44%	<b>●</b> 10% → 6%	<b>()</b> 1% → 3%

National drug market 10-year trend: comparison between 2011–12 and 2020–21

a. National border detection data reflect ATS (excluding MDMA). At this time, it is not possible at a national level to provide a further breakdown of drugs within the ATS (excluding MDMA) category.

b. National seizure and arrest data reflect amphetamines, which includes amphetamine, methylamphetamine, dexamphetamine and amphetamines not elsewhere classified. At this time, it is not possible at a national level to provide a further breakdown of drugs within the amphetamines category. Based on available data, methylamphetamine accounts for the majority of amphetamines seizures and arrests.

c. Heroin arrests include arrests for heroin and other opioids.

d. National median prices for a street deal, equivalent to 0.1 gram of methylamphetamine, 1 MDMA tablet, 1 gram of hydroponic cannabis, 0.2 grams of cocaine or one taste/cap of heroin (0.1–0.3 grams). National median prices are calculated using price data reported by 4 or more jurisdictions, with the exception of the 2011–12 price data for cocaine which used data reported by 3 jurisdictions (New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia).

e. Annual median purity reflects reported phenethylamine purity, the majority of which relates to MDMA.

f. National Drug Strategy Household Survey. Data is for 2011 and 2020 and reflects the proportion of the Australian population aged 14 years or older who reported having used cocaine.

g. Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program urinalysis data.

#### PROFILE OF ILLICIT DRUG DETECTIONS AT THE AUSTRALIAN BORDER

Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS)				
ATS (excluding MDMA)	MDMA	Cannabis	Heroin	Cocaine
• 27%	<b>U</b> -23%	<b>N 89%</b>	0 251%	<b>U</b> -18%
1,377 → 1,753	2,308 -> 1,773	12,846 <del>→</del> 24,255	177 → 622	2,660 → 2,169

#### Number of illicit drug detections—comparison between 2019–20 and 2020–21

Cannabis continued to account for the greatest number of border detections in 2020–21, followed by cocaine, MDMA, ATS<sup>2</sup> and heroin.

#### Weight of illicit drug detections—comparison between 2019–20 and 2020–21

Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS)				
ATS (excluding MDMA)	MDMA	Cannabis	Heroin	Cocaine
€ <1%	<b>U</b> -92%	• 26%	<b>1,026%</b>	<b>0</b> 237%
5,271kg → 5,290kg	1,291kg → 106kg	648kg → 819kg	110kg → 1,246kg	763kg → 2,575kg

ATS continued to account for the greatest proportion of the weight of border detections in 2020–21, followed by cocaine, heroin, cannabis and MDMA.

#### Proportion of illicit drug detections, by importation stream, in 2020–21

Drug Type	Importation stre	eam,	Importation str	eam,
	by number, 2020	)–21	by weight, 2020	D–21
ATS (excluding MDMA)	International mail Air cargo Sea cargo Air passenger/crew	69% 30% 1% <1%	Air cargo Sea cargo International mail Air passenger/crew	67% 28% 5% <1%
MDMA	International mail	98%	International mail	56%
	Air cargo	2%	Air cargo	44%
Cannabis	International mail	90%	International mail	55%
	Air cargo	10%	Air cargo	39%
	Air passenger/crew	<1%	Sea cargo	6%
	Sea cargo	<1%	Air passenger/crew	<1%
Heroin	International mail	62%	Air cargo	86%
	Air cargo	38%	International mail	7%
	Sea cargo	<1%	Sea cargo	7%
Cocaine	International mail	89%	Air cargo	53%
	Air cargo	11%	Sea cargo	44%
	Sea cargo	<1%	International mail	3%
	Air passenger/crew	<1%	Air passenger/crew	<1%

The international mail stream continued to account for the greatest proportion of the number of illicit drug detections at the Australian border, however the importation stream accounting for the greatest proportion of the weight detected varied by drug type.

#### PROFILE OF NATIONAL DRUG SEIZURES

Number of national illicit drug seizures—comparison between 2019–20 and 2020–21

National	ATS	Cannabis	Heroin	Cocaine	Other & unknown drugs
<b>U</b> -13%	<b>U</b> -27%	<b>U</b> -12%	<b>()</b> -4%	0 12%	19%
121,274 → 105,694	39,204 → 28,503	62,454 <del>→</del> 55,199	2,230 → 2,130	5,750 <del>→</del> 6,452	11,636 → 13,410

In 2020–21, cannabis continued to account for the greatest proportion of national illicit drug seizures (52%), followed by ATS (27%), other and unknown drugs (13%), cocaine (6%) and heroin (2%).

Although there was a decrease in national seizures this reporting period, the number of national illicit drug seizures increased 39% over the last decade, from 76,083 in 2011–12 to 105,694 in 2020–21.

#### Weight of illicit drug seizures—comparison between 2019–20 and 2020–21

National	ATS	Cannabis	Heroin	Cocaine	Other & unknown drugs
• 8%	<b>U</b> -51%	• 1%	<b>••</b> 506%	• 181%	• 41%
38.5t → 41.4t	12,864kg	10,662kg	210kg	1,573kg	13,276kg
	→ 6,287kg	→ 10,787kg	→ 1,278kg	→ 4,420kg	→ 18,694kg

In 2020–21, other and unknown drugs accounted for the greatest proportion of the weight of illicit drugs seized nationally (45%), followed by cannabis (26%), ATS (15%), cocaine (11%) and heroin (3%).

The weight of illicit drugs seized nationally increased during the current reporting period, and it also increased 74% over the last decade, from 23.8 tonnes in 2011–12 to a record 41.4 tonnes in 2020–21.

# Comparison of the weight of methylamphetamine, MDMA, heroin and cocaine seized nationally in 2020–21 and estimated consumption

Drug	Estimated consumption <sup>a</sup> (kilograms per annum)	2020–21 national seizures (gross kilograms)	Percentage of total estimated consumption seized (%)
Methylamphetamine	8,838	5,891 <sup>b</sup>	67
MDMA	1,231	249	20
Heroin	984	1,278	130
Cocaine	4,711	4,420	94

a. Consumption estimates are based on data derived from Year 5 of the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program.

b. At this time it is not possible at a national level to provide a further breakdown of drugs within the amphetamines category. As such, national seizure figures reflect the weight of amphetamines seized. Amphetamines include amphetamine, methylamphetamine, dexamphetamine and amphetamine not elsewhere classified. Based on available data, methylamphetamine accounts for the majority of amphetamines seized.

Wastewater analysis provides a measure of licit and illicit drug consumption within a given population. The ACIC has used wastewater data collected between August 2020 and August 2021 as part of the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (NWDMP) to estimate the annual weight of methylamphetamine, MDMA, heroin and cocaine consumed nationally. For 3 of the 4 drugs, the weight of the drugs seized by law enforcement agencies was relatively high compared to the estimated quantity consumed.

#### **PROFILE OF ILLICIT DRUG ARRESTS**

National illicit drug arrests—comparison between 2019–20 and 2020–21

National	ATS	Cannabis	Heroin	Cocaine	Other & unknown drugs
<b>U</b> -15%	<b>U</b> -28%	<b>U</b> -14%	<b>U</b> -20%	• 10%	<b>U</b> -5%
166,321 → 140,624	49,638 → 35,885	76,669 → 66,285	3,514 → 2,826	5,393 <del>→</del> 5,958	31,107 → 29,670

In 2020–21, cannabis continued to account for the greatest proportion of national illicit drug arrests (47%), followed by ATS (26%), other and unknown drugs (21%), cocaine (4%) and heroin and other opioids (2%).

Although there was a decrease in national illicit drug arrests this reporting period, the number of national illicit drug arrests increased 51% over the last decade, from 93,148 in 2011–12 to 140,624 in 2020–21.

Arrest data in the IDDR incorporate recorded law enforcement action against a person for suspected unlawful involvement in illicit drugs. It includes action by way of arrest and charge, summons, diversions, infringement and caution. The action taken by law enforcement is influenced by a number of factors, including but not limited to which state or territory the incident occurs in, the drug type and quantity and related legislation/regulation. In 2020–21, summons accounted for the greatest proportion of national drug arrests (43%), followed by arrest and charge (39%) and caution/diversion/infringement (18%). These proportions vary between drug type, with arrest and charge accounting for the greatest proportion of national ATS (48%), heroin and other opioids (59%), cocaine (46%), steroids (49%) and other and unknown (51%) arrests. Summons accounted for the greatest proportion of national cannabis (42%) and hallucinogens (45%) arrests in 2020–21.

# PROFILE OF NATIONAL CLANDESTINE LABORATORIES AND PRECURSORS

No. of detections	Size and production capacity		Location	
<b>U</b> -9%	Addict-based	44% <b>→ 40%</b>	• Residential	74% <b>→ 81%</b>
312 → 284	Other small	28% <b>→ 35%</b>	Commercial/industrial	8% → <b>8%</b>
	U Medium	24% <b>→ 20%</b>	U Vehicle	4% → <b>3%</b>
	Industrial	4% <b>→ 6%</b>	U Public place	4% → <b>3%</b>
			U Rural	4% → <b>2%</b>
			U Other	4% <b>→ 2%</b>

National clandestine laboratory detections—comparison between 2019–20 and 2020–21

In addition to the above, the majority of laboratories detected this reporting period were producing methylamphetamine, with the hypophosphorous method of production the predominant method identified.

#### Number of ATS precursor border detections—comparison between 2019–20 and 2020–21

ATS Precursors					
ATS (excluding MDMA)	MDMA				
<b>U</b> -28%	<b>••</b> 50%				
790 → 571	$4 \rightarrow 6$				

Over the last decade, the number of ATS (excluding MDMA) and MDMA precursor detections at the Australian border decreased 39% and 33% respectively.

#### Weight of ATS precursor detections—comparison between 2019–20 and 2020–21

ATS Precursors				
ATS (excluding MDMA) MDMA				
<b>U</b> -51%	<b>U</b> -92%			
2,099kg → 1,031kg	4.1kg → 320g			

In addition, the weight of ATS (excluding MDMA) and MDMA precursors detected at the Australian border decreased 41% and close to 100% respectively over the last decade.

# 2020-21 FEATURE - DRUG DRIVING

#### **KEY POINTS**

- Drug driving data is included for the first time in this report. Drug driving poses harm to the user and other drivers. The data covers both roadside and mandatory drug testing. The ACIC is working with state and territory police services to build this dataset.
- Of the total tests conducted nationally in 2020–21, amphetamine/methylamphetamine was most commonly detected, followed by cannabis and MDMA.
- Based on the data provided for this collection period:
  - male drug drivers accounted for the greatest proportion of the number of positive drug driving tests
  - the 30–39 age group accounted for the greatest proportion of the number of positive drug driving tests
  - with the exception of Tasmania, the number of drivers who tested positive to only one drug
    accounted for the majority of the total test results in all jurisdictions.

#### INTRODUCTION

Due to the potential for harm to the drug user and other road users when a person drives under the influence of drugs, drug driving is an offence which is governed by state and territory legislation. As of January 2020, all Australian states and territories had Roadside Drug Testing (RDT) laws that required a driver to provide a saliva sample in roadside testing, and a blood or urine sample in other specified circumstances (mandatory testing), which is then tested for the presence of illicit substances. All state and territory jurisdictions follow a model which penalises the presence of drugs, and does not test for impairment.

Drug driving data provide another way of monitoring trends in drug markets across the states and territories of Australia, increasing visibility of changes in demand in Australia's illicit drug markets and providing an indication of one facet of the harm caused by illicit drug use.

The legislation governing each state and territory may vary. Most of the variation relates to the testing procedures and the substances tested, although all jurisdictions test for at least methylamphetamine, cannabis/THC and MDMA.

Data was not available for the Northern Territory in this period, and different reporting styles in different jurisdictions means that not all results are immediately comparable. To compensate for this, data is compared between jurisdictions which reported data for the same categories. Complete data was not available for all jurisdictions, and comparisons are made only between states where data for a particular category was available. The dataset covers the 2020–21 financial year. For the purposes of this analysis, positive results refer to results obtained following analysis at a forensic laboratory.

# 

#### DRUG DRIVING IMPACTS

The impacts of drug driving on the community are well established. There is a variety of side effects associated with using drugs and they can have different effects on users' ability to drive, depending on the class of drug used. For example, cannabis use is associated with poor reaction times and lane swerving (Compton 2017). Combining different drugs could increase negative effects, increasing the risk of serious accidents. Research from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) shows that the likelihood of a driver who tests positive to a drug being involved in a crash is higher compared to a driver who has not consumed a drug (see Table 1; ADF 2022; Arkell et al 2021).

Drug classes	Crash Risk Estimate	Side effects
<b>Depressants</b> (e.g. benzodiazepines)	Benzodiazepines 1.17–2.30	<ul><li>Reduced reaction time</li><li>Reduced concentration</li></ul>
<b>Opioids</b> (e.g. heroin and oxycodone)	<b>Opiates</b> 1.68–2.29	<ul><li>Drowsiness</li><li>Difficulty processing information</li></ul>
Cannabis	1.11–1.42	<ul> <li>Difficulty multitasking</li> </ul>
Stimulants (e.g. amphetamines and cocaine)	na	<ul> <li>Attention difficulties</li> <li>Tendency to fidget</li> <li>Aggressive and dangerous driving</li> <li>Increased risk taking</li> <li>Over-confidence in driving skills</li> </ul>
Hallucinogens (e.g. LSD, psilocybin and mescaline)	na	<ul><li>Hallucinations</li><li>Confused thinking</li><li>Blurred vision</li><li>Reduced coordination</li></ul>

# TABLE 1: Commonly detected drug classes and their Crash Risk Estimate<sup>a</sup> and associated side effects (Source: RACGP and ADF)

a. Crash Risk Estimate is presented as an odds ratio describing the likelihood of a driver who tests positive to a drug or alcohol being involved in a crash relative to a driver who has not consumed the substance.

#### DOMESTIC MARKET INDICATORS

The Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) collects self-report information on drug use and related harms annually from individuals in Australian capital cities who regularly inject drugs. According to IDRS data:

- The proportion of respondents who reported driving within 3 hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the last 6 months decreased over the last decade, from 35% in 2012 (77% of those who had driven recently<sup>3</sup>) to 25% in 2021 (70% of those who had driven recently).
- Among those who reported driving within 3 hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the last 6 months, the majority of respondents reported using crystal methylamphetamine (59%), followed by heroin (35%) and cannabis (35%) in 2021. In 2012, the majority of respondents reported using heroin (39%), followed by cannabis (28%) and any type of methylamphetamine (23%).
- In 2021, Queensland reported the highest proportion of respondents who reported driving within 3 hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the last 6 months (37%), followed by Western Australia (35%) and Tasmania (30%).
- In 2021, 9% of respondents reported being tested for drug driving by police roadside drug testing in the 6 months preceding interview (Stafford & Burns 2013; Sutherland et al. 2021a).

The Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) collects self-report information on drug use and related harms annually from individuals in Australian capital cities who regularly use ecstasy and other stimulants. According to EDRS data:

- The proportion of respondents who had driven in the 6 months preceding interview increased, from 76% in 2012 to 84% in 2021. The proportion of respondents who reported driving within 3 hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the last 6 months decreased over the last decade, from 44% in 2012 to 39% in 2021.
- Among those who reported driving within 3 hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the last 6 months, a majority reported using cannabis (71%), followed by cocaine (21%) and pharmaceutical stimulants (12%) in 2021. Smaller numbers reported using crystal methylamphetamine (10%) compared to IDRS. In 2012, the majority of respondents reported using cannabis (72%), ecstasy (49%) and crystal methylamphetamine (17%).
- In 2021, Queensland reported the highest proportion of respondents who reported driving within 3 hours of consuming an illicit or non-prescribed drug in the last 6 months (49%), followed by Western Australia (44%) and the Australian Capital Territory (43%).
- In 2021, 10% of respondents reported being tested for drug driving by police roadside drug testing in the 6 months preceding interview (Sindicich & Burns 2013; Sutherland et al. 2021b).

<sup>3</sup> In both the IDRS and EDRS studies, recent refers to the 6 months preceding interview.

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT DRUG DRIVING DATA

In 2020–21, drug driving data was provided by all police services except the Northern Territory, which was unable to provide data for the relevant period.

#### DRUG DETECTED

Of the total tests conducted nationally in 2020–21, amphetamine/methylamphetamine (Amph/Meth) was most commonly detected, accounting for 54% of positive results. This was followed by cannabis (39%) and MDMA (3%). Amph/Meth accounted for the greatest proportion of positive tests in all jurisdictions except Queensland, where cannabis was more prevalent. New South Wales accounted for the greatest proportion of total positive amph/meth results in 2020–21 (30%; see Figure 1).



#### FIGURE 1: Proportion of total positive tests by drug type and jurisdiction, 2020–21<sup>a, b</sup>

a. New South Wales and Tasmania are the only states which use roadside testing to determine the presence of cocaine. Note that data supplied by New South Wales in relation to roadside testing did not identify the drug types.

b. Where multiple drugs are detected within a single sample, each drug is included in Figure 1.

#### GENDER

Data from 2020–21 identifies that the largest proportion of individuals testing positive for drug driving were male (76%), with females accounting for 24%. The 'unknown' group constituted <1% of positive results (see Table 2). The proportion of females testing positive for drug driving ranged between 23% and 27% in the reporting jurisdictions (see Figure 2).



#### FIGURE 2: Gender distribution of total positive drug driving cases per jurisdiction, 2020–21

The Amph/Meth category accounted for the largest proportion of positive drug driving tests for females (63%) and males (50%; see Table 2 and Figure 3).

Davia		Total		
Drug	Female	Male	Unknown	IOtai
Amph/Meth	6,303	16,313	5	22,621
MDMA	287	967	0	1,254
Cannabis	3,229	13,680	2	16,911
Cocaine	131	1,428	0	1,559
Heroin	0	5	0	5
Other	72	186	0	258
Total	10,022	32,579	7	42,608

#### TABLE 2: Total drug driving positive tests by drug and gender, 2020–21

The above data emphasises the considerable gap nationally between drivers who returned positive tests for Amph/Meth (53%) and those who returned positive tests for cannabis (40%) or other drugs (7%).





#### 100% 90% Percentage of positive tests (%) 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0% Amph/Meth Cannabis MDMA Cocaine Other Heroin

■ Female ■ Male ■ Unknown

#### AGE GROUPS

An individual's age is recorded when they are tested for illicit substances while on the road. Of those who tested positive, 32% were aged between 30 and 39. Of the jurisdictions which had comparable data, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Queensland all reported individuals aged 30–39 years as accounting for the greatest proportion of positive drug driving results. In New South Wales this varied, with the 20–29 age group accounting for the greatest proportion of positive drug driving results (32%, see Figure 4).



FIGURE 4: Age distribution of positive drug driving cases per jurisdiction, 2020–21

Amph/Meth was the most common category of drug detected for the 30–39, 40–49 and 50–59 age groups in 2020–21, accounting for between 57% and 63% of the total positive drug driving tests within those age groups. In contrast, cannabis was the most common category of drug detected for the <19, 20–29 and 60+ category, accounting for between 49% and 68% of the total positive drug driving tests within those age groups (see Table 3 and Figure 5).

	Age Group (years)						
Drug	<19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Total
Amph/Meth	202	5,091	8,464	6,489	2,103	268	22,617
MDMA	120	532	357	188	51	8	1,256
Cannabis	971	6,067	4,701	3,402	1,462	322	16,925
Heroin	0	2	3	0	0	0	5
Cocaine	122	739	411	198	71	18	1,559
Other	20	79	88	35	29	36	287
Total	1,435	12,510	14,024	10,312	3,716	652	42,649

#### TABLE 3: Positive drug driving tests by drug and age group, 2020–21

#### FIGURE 5: Percentage of total positive tests by drug type and age group, 2020–21



#### **POLYDRUG USE**

Polydrug use refers to instances where individuals have more than one substance in their system at the time of testing. Polydrug use when driving increases the risk of accident and serious injury when compared to the use of a single substance. A positive test for a single drug accounted for between 59% and 84% of total cases in all jurisdictions except Tasmania (32%; see Figure 6).



#### Three or more One Two Pending results 100% Percentage of total positives in the state (%) 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0% VIC NSW TAS<sup>a</sup> ACT SA Old

a. It should be noted that Tasmania uses hospital-based sample analysis which tests for a far greater range of substances, which accounts for some of their over-representation in polydrug positive results.

b. All jurisdictions shown, with the exception of Queensland, provided both blood and oral fluid test results.

FIGURE 6: Number of drugs detected per positive test by jurisdiction, 2020–21<sup>a, b</sup>

#### **CASE STUDY 1: POLYDRUG USE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

South Australian data identified the combinations of drugs which were most commonly seen in their drug driving sample analysis. Of the combinations recorded, 'cannabis and amphetamines' was the most prevalent positive result in 2020–21, recorded 874 times and accounting for 86% of polydrug detections in South Australia. This was followed by the combinations 'amphetamines and MDMA' (7%) and 'MDMA and cannabis' (4%).



- FIGURE 7: Proportion of drug combinations in South Australia in 2020–21
  - Amphetamine and THC (86%)
  - Amphetamine and MDMA (7%)
  - Amphetamine, MDMA and THC (3%)

#### SAMPLE TYPE

The 2 main sample types collected for drug driving testing are saliva and blood/urine. Blood and urine sample results are not able to be separated and so they are combined for the purposes of this analysis.

According to saliva and blood/urine tests, most positive results were for Amph/Meth, while cannabis accounted for the next largest proportion of positive results (see Table 4 and Figure 8).

#### TABLE 4: Proportion of positive results by sample type for the period 2020–21

Drug	Blood/Urine (%)	Saliva Test (%)
Amph/Meth	52.2	53.9
MDMA	2.6	2.8
Cannabis	25.7	41.3
Cocaine	0.0	0.6
Heroin	0.0	0.0
Other	19.5	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0

# FIGURE 8: Proportion of positive saliva tests by drug and positive blood/urine results by drug, 2020–21<sup>a, b</sup>



a. This graph reflects positive samples from South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales. OFT refers to oral fluid test.
b. New South Wales data contained multiple test outcomes for the same individuals at the same incident. These have been combined to only be deemed positive where there were 2 positive tests of the same substance, for the same individual at the same incident.

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#### LAW ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVES

In response to the increasing threat posed by drug driving to the Australian community, Australian law enforcement agencies have implemented a range of initiatives and operations.

Specific operations targeting drug driving include:

- Operation Fume—a road policing operation targeting alcohol and drug-affected drivers and road-related offences. This operation was conducted by officers from the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command North West Sector within the New South Wales Police Force, with assistance from The Hills, Parramatta and Ryde Police Area Commands on 5 and 6 March 2021 in Sydney.
- Operation Tango Anaconda—a state-wide enforcement operation conducted by the Queensland Police Service between 1 March and 30 June 2021 which focused on high visibility random drug testing to deter drug driving offences and prevent serious and fatal crashes.
- Enough is Enough Road Safety Campaign—began in May 2022 as part of Tasmania Police's commitment to making Tasmanian roads as safe as possible.

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Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission

Illicit Drug Data Report 2020–21

# ABBREVIATIONS

1,4-BD	1,4-butanediol
4-MMC	4-methylmethcathinone
AAS	Anabolic-androgenic steroids
ACIC	Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANSPS	Australian Needle and Syringe Program Survey
ATS	Amphetamine-type stimulants
CEN	Cannabis Expiation Notice
CIR	Cannabis Intervention Requirement
DIN	Drug Infringement Notice
DUMA	Drug Use Monitoring in Australia
EDRS	Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System
ENIPID	Enhanced National Intelligence Picture on Illicit Drugs
Eph	Ephedrine
FDI	Forensic Drug Intelligence
GHB	Gamma-hydroxybutyrate
GBL	Gamma-butyrolactone
IDDR	Illicit Drug Data Report
IDRS	Illicit Drug Reporting System
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
LIDS	Large illicit drug seizures
LSD	Lysergic acid diethylamide

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MDMA	3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine
NDSHS	National Drug Strategy Household Survey
NEC	Not elsewhere classified
ΝΜΙ	National Measurement Institute
NPS	New psychoactive substances
NSW	New South Wales
ΝΤ	Northern Territory
NWDMP	National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program
P2P	Phenyl-2-propanone
PIED	Performance and image enhancing drug
PSE	Pseudoephedrine
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SCON	Simple Cannabis Offence Notice
SEA	South-East Asia
SWA	South-West Asia
Tas	Tasmania
тнс	Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
wco	World Customs Organization
WWA	Wastewater analysis